



Owner-Operator's Business
Association of Canada
Association professionnelle des
routiers autonomes du Canada

*...from the
director's chair*

OBAC meets, joins with Nfld. group

One of OBAC's primary goals is to establish working relations with provincial and regional trucking groups across Canada.

While OBAC's focus is on national issues which face all drivers, there are several other well-established trucking associations who are already vigorously advocating for their members' concerns at the local level. Our purpose is not to duplicate or replace their efforts but to enhance and support them wherever possible.

Past attempts at uniting owner/operators have had mixed success. Many well known associations started with an enthusiastic following only to fall apart later for a variety of reasons, including under-funding due to a lack of membership, turf wars that undercut the initial purpose and personality conflicts among the initial participants. OBAC has had its own share of these problems but we've managed to weather those storms and are now much better placed to provide the forum for owner/operator concerns across the country.

A crucial part of this initiative was cemented the last weekend of May in St. John's, when OBAC VP Don Robertson met with Jon Summers, president of the Newfoundland & Labrador Independent Truckers Association (NLITA) during the association's annual general meeting.

OBAC subsequently issued this press release dated May 29th:

"The Owner-Operator's Business Association of Canada today signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Newfoundland & Labrador Independent Truckers Association (NLITA). The agreement creates an alliance between the associations that will see better representation for NLITA members on national issues and the creation of the first of OBAC's provincial/regional caucuses.

"The provincial associations will always be closer and more responsive to the local issues than a national association could be," said OBAC

executive director, Joanne Ritchie. "But OBAC believes national representation will give the local associations the scope to take members' concerns beyond provincial boundaries, especially since many issues are common across the country."

"The alliance between OBAC and NLITA demonstrates that owner/operators can indeed see eye to eye in developing solutions to problems, and can work together toward a common set of goals. NLITA has already had success in working with the provincial government and the Newfoundland and Labrador Carriers Association in improving carrier relations and highway safety."

"It's a good time to move forward with this alliance, given the current concerns of the owner/operator community," said NLITA president, Jon Summers. 'I said when we started NLITA that we'd be even more effective under the umbrella of some larger, national organization, and now that OBAC is moving in the right direction, I'm thrilled to be combining our efforts for the benefit of all owner/operators.'

"OBAC and NLITA will strive for good working relations with provincial governments and the local business communities in an effort to improve the business climate for Canada's small business truckers, and in a broader context, work to improve highway safety and the image of the owner/operator and the industry in general.

"It's good to see owner/operators now have a voice that will be heard right across the country," said Duncan, B.C.-based OBAC vice president, Don Robertson. "Owner/operators will now be well-served from coast to coast."

This is only the first of several outreach efforts by OBAC to other groups whose fundamental goals and objectives complement OBAC's, and who share our philosophy and underlying principles. Our aim is to eventually create a network of alliances with owner/operator



Mike Smith: OBAC board member

groups so that the strength of these numbers can be harnessed to create increased influence with government departments, carrier groups and the general public.

It won't happen overnight nor will it be easy to accomplish. Many existing groups are rightfully suspicious of overtures they've received in the past. Often these approaches have been thinly disguised takeover attempts that have done nothing but leave ill feelings behind. Besides, the strength of local and regional groups is in their complete understanding of the concerns facing them; OBAC's purpose is to support the regional efforts, not to co-opt them.

There are many issues facing owner/operators across the country right now where OBAC is ideally placed to make an impact: fuel surcharges, waiting time, hours-of-service, insurance and border security are among the foremost. By gathering the opinions and experiences of the nation's drivers under one umbrella group, it's a small step to take those concerns to the rest of the country with a better expectation of being given serious attention.

Now that a national election has been called, expect to read the reactions of politicians to pointed questions from OBAC on behalf of Canada's truckers. The continually rising cost of diesel fuel and the often promised federal rebates of fuel taxes to the provinces to deal with highway infrastructure are among the leading issues facing Canadian owner/operators.

The federal government has promised to deal with these matters but so far has avoided the issue. Meanwhile answers are being demanded across the country.